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SUBJECT: NORWAY MEDIA REACTION: MISSILE DEFENSE SHIELD

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The U.S.'s decision to shelve the plans to base a missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic has gotten wide and favorable coverage in Norwegian media. One commentator questions whether the decision might weaken the President. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) As reported by national public broadcaster NRK and newspaper-of-record Aftenposten, Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere says that the President's decision is "wise" and "positive": "Politically and militarily we were very skeptical towards Bush's plans, which we made clear. It is a gigantic project based on threats which were not clearly documented and which could have started a new arms race.... It was handled poorly by Bush.... This shows that the Obama administration has thought independently and not just followed the track from President Bush. The important thing now is to move the discussion into NATO and build on the capabilities of the alliance...." Regarding Secretary Gate's statement that the new plans may include sensors in both northern and southern Europe, Stoere said he has no reason to believe that this will include Norway.

¶3. (U) The editorial in independent daily Dagbladet (circulation 136,000) is entitled "Shot Down a Bush" and says "Bushism is being shot down, one idea at a time, and that is a good thing.... As the missile shield now is buried, one dimension of conflict with Russia is gone. One of the most important conditions for a new arms race has been removed.... The cancellation of the missile defense shield in Europe has created an important foundation for creative diplomacy. Now, the West and Russia can play on the same team in relation to Iran...."

¶4. (U) The editorial of independent daily VG (circulation 310,000) is entitled "Americans Turnaround" and says: "The government of Norway is not alone in drawing a sigh of relief over the news that a missile defense shield in Europe has been cancelled.... Both for the U.S. and NATO it has been important to avoid any impression that the Kremlin has some kind of veto over U.S. and NATO defense installations.... For the U.S., it is an important shift in foreign policy which may improve cooperation with Russia considerably.... Whatever president Obama's reasons, the Norwegian Government has every reason to be happy; as a neighbor of Russia it is important to Norway that the relationship between the two powers does not deteriorate."

5.. (U) Commentator Harald Berg Saevereid writes in independent daily VG that "While there is every reason to welcome the decision, it might weaken President Obama at home.... The persistent efforts of the American right to present Obama as a weak president may get wind in their sails when he now seems to have scrapped the Bush administration's great European project in Russian and Czech Republic. President Obama's American and European congregation, not least in the Kremlin, will be very happy that the Obama administration is abandoning the Bush line.... There is a certain risk that the Russians, too, see Obama as a weak politician. But a large majority of Western democracies will

praise Obama for a sensible choice.... What is certain is that the anti-Obama movement in the U.S. has gained momentum."

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